EDU 221

Spring 2013

Curriculum Instruction Assessment (CIA)

FIAE Combo Reflections – Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10

Together, these four chapters detail the different grading policies and practices within a differentiated classroom. The chapters address issue such as subjective grading, understanding the purpose of grading, assessment and grading pitfalls, and the value of allowing students to improve upon their graded work. In these chapters, Wormeli encourages educators to be reflective practitioners, teachers who carefully analyze their grading policies and practices, who can recognize the fragility of grades and, as such, are able to keep "them in perspective” (Wormeli, p95). In order to achieve this goal, Wormeli provides details regarding different, but helpful, practices. These practices include: avoiding “equal-pacing for-all” (Wormeli, p96) and determining averages based on student comparison, providing more “formative and specific feedback” (Wormeli, p100) to help student become reflective learners, adopting a grading policy that includes non-academic/behavioral factors such as participation, progress and effort, and knowing when and where grading is beneficial and when it can be detrimental to student success. The author also advocates the value of redos. Wormeli argues that, under certain specified criteria, providing students with an opportunity to improve upon previously graded work can result in deeper learning. Moreover, Wormeli contends that the act of redos isn’t reserved to the classroom, but is, in fact, a common reality of the world we all live in.

While I found all the chapters to be persuasive and informative in their various discussions about grading, it was the ideas presented in chapter 10 really resonated with me. My high school was a land of “high stakes assessment and tests.” I was never given the opportunity to improve upon an assignment or test once it was submitted. This “one-shot” mentality meant that, as a student, the very idea of a redo never occurred to me. Yet, after reading this chapter it seems redos, under the right set of circumstances, would be a wonderful tool to aid student success. Many of us don’t get things right the first time round. I am a living, breathing example of this. I didn’t get the whole academic thing down as a teenager, especially the math part, and yet here I am currently working on a massive redo. I would definitely want to provide my students with this opportunity in my class. As one of the quoted teacher states “math is developmental. I don’t think that all kids learn math at the same pace, or at the same time in their life.” I believe my life experiences, thus far, have prepared me to be a better teacher in this regard. I have a personal understanding of what it is to struggle, particularly with math, and if a student felt like they could improve upon their performance, and were willing to adhere to the redo guidelines, I would most certainly facilitate that. I believe there are many benefits to this practice that go beyond the academic. A student who wants to improve and to reflect on their work should be encouraged to do so. How can we hope to create students who are life-long learners if we discourage these practices?